

Navajo language

Navajo or **Navaho** (/ˈnævəhoʊ, ˈnɑː-/ ^[3] Navajo: *Diné bizaad* [t̪ínépìz̪àːt] or *Naabeehó bizaad* [n̪ɑːpèːhópiz̪àːt]) is a Southern Athabaskan language of the Na-Dené family, through which it is related to languages spoken across the western areas of North America. Navajo is spoken primarily in the Southwestern United States, especially in the Navajo Nation. It is one of the most widely spoken Native American languages and is the most widely spoken north of the Mexico–United States border, with almost 170,000 Americans speaking Navajo at home as of 2011. The language has struggled to keep a healthy speaker base, although this problem has been alleviated to some extent by extensive education programs in the Navajo Nation.

The language has a fairly large phoneme inventory; it includes several uncommon consonants that are not found in English. Its four basic vowels are distinguished for nasality, length, and tone. It has both agglutinative and fusional elements: it relies on affixes to modify verbs, and nouns are typically created from multiple morphemes, but in both cases these morphemes are fused irregularly and beyond easy recognition. Basic word order is subject–object–verb, though it is highly flexible to pragmatic factors. Verbs are conjugated for aspect and mood, and given affixes for the person and number of both subjects and objects, as well as a host of other variables.

The language's orthography, which was developed in the late 1930s after a series of prior attempts, is based on the Latin script. Most Navajo vocabulary is Athabaskan in origin, as the language has been conservative with loanwords since its early stages.

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Navajo	
<i>Diné bizaad</i>	
Native to	United States
Region	Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado
Ethnicity	Navajo
<div>Native speakers</div>	169,359 (2011) ^[1]
<div>Language family</div>	<div>Dené–Yeniseian? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Na-Dené<ul style="list-style-type: none">Athabaskan<ul style="list-style-type: none">Southern Athabaskan<ul style="list-style-type: none">Southwestern Apache<ul style="list-style-type: none">Western<ul style="list-style-type: none">Navajo</div>
<div>Writing system</div>	Latin (Navajo alphabet) <p>Navajo Braille</p>
Language codes	
ISO 639-1	nv (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?iso_639_1=nv)
ISO 639-2	nav (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=317)
ISO 639-3	nav
Glottolog	nava1243 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/nava1243) ^[2]

Notes

References

Further reading

Educational

Linguistics and other reference

External links

Linguistics



The Navajo Nation, where the language is most spoken

Nomenclature

The word *Navajo* is an exonym: it comes from the Tewa word *Navahu*, which combines the roots *nava* ("field") and *hu* ("valley") to mean "large field". It was borrowed into Spanish to refer to an area of present-day northwestern New Mexico, and later into English for the Navajo tribe and their language.^[4] The alternative spelling *Navaho* is considered antiquated; even anthropologist Berard Haile spelled it with a "j" in accordance with contemporary usage despite his personal objections.^[5] The Navajo refer to themselves as the *Diné* ("People"), with their language known as *Diné bizaad* ("People's language")^[6] or *Naabeehó bizaad*.

Classification

Navajo is an Athabaskan language, and along with Apache languages, make up the southernmost branch of the family. Most of the other Athabaskan languages are located in Alaska and along the North American Pacific coast.

Most languages in the Athabaskan family have tone. However, this feature evolved independently in all subgroups; Proto-Athabaskan had no tones.^[7] In each case, tone evolved from glottalic consonants at the ends of morphemes; however, the progression of these consonants into tones has not been consistent, with some related morphemes being pronounced with high tones in some Athabaskan languages and low tones in others. It has been posited that Navajo and Chipewyan, which have no common ancestor more recent than Proto-Athabaskan and possess many pairs of corresponding but opposite tones, evolved from different dialects of Proto-Athabaskan that pronounced these glottalic consonants differently.^[8] Proto-Athabaskan diverged fully into separate languages circa 500 BCE.^[9]

Navajo is most closely related to Western Apache, with which it shares a similar tonal scheme^[10] and more than 92 percent of its vocabulary. It is estimated that the Apachean linguistic groups separated and became established as distinct societies, of which the Navajo were one, somewhere between 1300 and 1525.^[11] As a member of the Western Apachean group, Navajo's closest relative is the Mescalero-Chiricahua language.^[12] Navajo is generally considered mutually intelligible with all other Apachean languages.^[13]

History

The Apachean languages, of which Navajo is one, are thought to have arrived in the American Southwest from the north by 1500 CE, probably passing through Alberta and Wyoming.^{[14][15]} Archaeological finds considered to be proto-Navajo have been located in the far northern New Mexico around the La Plata, Animas and Pine rivers, dating to around 1500. In 1936, linguist Edward Sapir showed how the arrival of the Navajo people in the new arid climate among the corn agriculturalists of the Pueblo area was reflected in their language by tracing the changing meanings of words from Proto-Athabaskan to Navajo. For example, the word **dè:*, which in Proto-Athabaskan meant "horn" and "dipper made from animal horn", in Navajo came to mean "gourd" or "dipper made from gourd". Likewise, the Proto-Athabaskan word **í-yáxs* "snow lies on the ground" in Navajo became *sàs* "corn lies on the ground". Similarly, the Navajo word for "corn" is *nà:-dq:*, derived from two Proto-Athabaskan roots meaning "enemy" and "food", suggesting that the Navajo originally considered corn to be "food of the enemy" when they first arrived among the Pueblo people.^{[16][17]}

Colonization and decline

Navajo lands were initially colonized by the Spanish in the early nineteenth century, shortly after this area was "annexed" as part of the Spanish colony of Mexico. When the United States annexed these territories in 1848 following the Mexican–American War,^[18] the English-speaking settlers allowed Navajo children to attend their schools. In some cases, the United States established separate schools for Navajo and other Native American children. In the late 19th century, it founded boarding schools, often operated by religious missionary groups. In efforts to acculturate the children, school authorities insisted that they learn to speak English and practice Christianity. Students routinely had their mouths washed out with lye soap as a punishment if they did speak Navajo.^[19] Consequently, when these students grew up and had children of their own, they often did not teach them Navajo, in order to prevent them from being punished.^[20]

Robert W. Young and William Morgan (Navajo), who both worked for the Navajo Agency of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, developed and published a practical orthography in 1937. It helped spread education among Navajo speakers.^[21] In 1943 the men collaborated on *The Navajo Language*, a dictionary organized by the roots of the language.^[22] In World War II, the United States military used speakers of Navajo as code talkers – to transmit top-secret military messages over telephone and radio in a code based on Navajo. The language was considered ideal because of its grammar, which differs strongly from that of German and Japanese, and because no published Navajo dictionaries existed at the time.^[23]

Despite gaining new scholarly attention and being documented, the language declined in use. By the 1960s, indigenous languages of the United States had been declining in use for some time. Native American language use began to decline more quickly in this decade as paved roads were built and English-language radio was broadcast to tribal areas. Navajo was no exception, although its large speaker pool—larger than that of any other Native language in the United States—gave it more staying power than most.^[24] Adding to the language's decline, federal acts passed in the 1950s to increase educational opportunities for Navajo children had resulted in pervasive use of English in their schools.^[25]

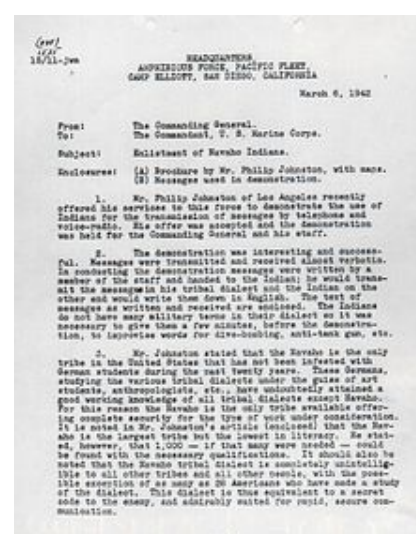
Revitalization and current status

In 1968, U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Bilingual Education Act, which provided funds for educating young students who are not native English speakers. The Act had mainly been intended for Spanish-speaking children—particularly Mexican Americans—but it applied to all recognized linguistic minorities. Many Native American tribes seized the chance to establish their own bilingual education programs. However, qualified teachers who were fluent in Native languages were scarce, and these programs were largely unsuccessful.^[24]

However, data collected in 1980 showed that 85 percent of Navajo first-graders were bilingual, compared to 62 percent of Navajo of all ages – early evidence of a resurgence of use of their traditional language among younger people.^[26] In 1984, to counteract the language's historical decline, the Navajo Nation Council decreed that the Navajo language would be available and comprehensive for students of all grade levels in schools of the Navajo Nation.^[24] This effort was aided by the fact that, largely due to the work of Young and Morgan, Navajo is one of the best-documented Native American languages. In 1980 they published a monumental expansion of their work on



Examples of written Navajo on public signs. Clockwise from top left: Student Services Building, Diné College; cougar exhibit, Navajo Nation Zoo; shopping center near Navajo, New Mexico; notice of reserved parking, Window Rock



General Clayton Barney Vogel's recommendation letter for Navajo to be used by code talkers during World War II

the language, organized by word (first initial of vowel or consonant) in the pattern of English dictionaries, as requested by Navajo students. *The Navajo Language: A Grammar and Colloquial Dictionary* also included a 400-page grammar, making it invaluable for both native speakers and students of the language. Particularly in its organization of verbs, it was oriented to Navajo speakers.^[27] They expanded this work again in 1987, with several significant additions, and this edition continues to be used as an important text.^[22]

The Native American language education movement has been met with adversity, such as by English-only campaigns in some areas in the late 1990s. However, Navajo-immersion programs have cropped up across the Navajo Nation. Statistical evidence shows that Navajo-immersion students generally do better on standardized tests than their counterparts educated only in English. Some educators have remarked that students who know their native languages feel a sense of pride and identity validation.^[28] Since 1989, Diné College, a Navajo tribal community college, has offered an associate degree in the subject of Navajo.^[29] This program includes language, literature, culture, medical terminology, and teaching courses and produces the highest number of Navajo teachers of any institution in the United States. About 600 students attend per semester.^[30] One major university that teaches classes in the Navajo language is Arizona State University.^[31] In 1992, Young and Morgan published another major work on Navajo: *Analytical Lexicon of Navajo*, with the assistance of Sally Midgette (Navajo). This work is organized by root, the basis of Athabaskan languages.^[22]

A 1991 survey of 682 preschoolers in the Navajo Reservation Head Start program found that 54 percent were monolingual English speakers, 28 percent were bilingual in English and Navajo, and 18 percent spoke only Navajo. This study noted that while the preschool staff knew both languages, they spoke English to the children most of the time. In addition, most of the children's parents spoke to the children in English more often than in Navajo. The study concluded that the preschoolers were in "almost total immersion in English".^[32] An American Community Survey taken in 2011 found that 169,369 Americans spoke Navajo at home – 0.3 percent of Americans whose primary home language was not English. Of primary Navajo speakers, 78.8 percent reported they spoke English "very well", a fairly high percentage overall but less than among other Americans speaking a different Native American language (85.4 percent). Navajo was the only Native American language afforded its own category in the survey; domestic Navajo speakers represented 46.4 percent of all domestic Native language speakers (only 195,407 Americans have a different home Native language).^[1] As of July 2014, Ethnologue classes Navajo as "6b" (In Trouble), signifying that few, but some, parents teach the language to their offspring and that concerted efforts at revitalization could easily protect the language. Navajo had a high population for a language in this category.^[33] About half of all Navajo people live on Navajo Nation land, an area spanning parts of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah; others are dispersed throughout the United States.^[18] Under tribal law, fluency in Navajo is mandatory for candidates to the office of the President of the Navajo Nation.^[34]

Both original and translated media have been produced in Navajo. The first works tended to be religious texts translated by missionaries, including the Bible. From 1943 to about 1957, the Navajo Agency of the BIA published Ádahooníígíí ("Events"^[35]), the first newspaper in Navajo and the only one to be written entirely in Navajo. It was edited by Robert W. Young and William Morgan, Sr. (Navajo). They had collaborated on *The Navajo Language*, a major language dictionary published that same year, and continued to work on studying and documenting the language in major works for the next few decades.^[22] Today an AM radio station, KTNN, broadcasts in Navajo and English, with programming including music and NFL games;^[36] AM station KNDN broadcasts only in Navajo.^[37] When Super Bowl XXX was broadcast in Navajo in 1996, it was the first time a Super Bowl had been carried in a Native American language.^[38] In 2013, the 1977 film Star Wars was translated into Navajo. It was the first major motion picture translated into any Native American language.^{[39][40]}

On October 5, 2018, an early beta of a Navajo course was released on Duolingo.^[41]

Education

The Navajo Nation operates Tséhootsooí Diné Bi'ólta', a Navajo language immersion school for grades K-8 in Fort Defiance, Arizona. Located on the Arizona-New Mexico border in the southeastern quarter of the Navajo Reservation, the school strives to revitalize Navajo among children of the Window Rock Unified School District. Tséhootsooí Diné Bi'ólta' has thirteen Navajo language teachers who instruct only in the Navajo language, and no

English, while five English language teachers instruct in the English language. Kindergarten and first grade are taught completely in the Navajo language, while English is incorporated into the program during third grade, when it is used for about 10% of instruction.^[42]

Phonology

Navajo has a fairly large consonant inventory. Its stop consonants exist in three laryngeal forms: aspirated, unaspirated, and ejective – for example, /tʃ^h/, /tʃ/, and /tʃ'/.^[43] Ejective consonants are those that are pronounced with a glottalic initiation. Navajo also has a simple glottal stop used after vowels,^[44] and every word that would otherwise begin with a vowel is pronounced with an initial glottal stop.^[45] Consonant clusters are uncommon, aside from frequent placing /d/ or /t/ before fricatives.^[46]

The language has four vowel qualities: /a/, /e/, /i/, and /o/.^[46] Each exists in both oral and nasalized forms, and can be either short or long.^[47] Navajo also distinguishes for tone between high and low, with the low tone typically regarded as the default. However, some linguists have suggested that Navajo does not possess true tones, but only a pitch accent system similar to that of Japanese.^[48] In general, Navajo speech also has a slower speech tempo than English does.^[44]

Consonants

			Bilabial	Alveolar			Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar		Glottal	
				plain	lateral	fricated			plain	lab.	plain	lab.
Obstruent	Stop	unaspirated	p	t	t ^l	ts	tʃ		k		ʔ	
		aspirated		t ^h	tʃ ^h	ts ^h	tʃ ^h		k ^h	(k ^{w h})		
		ejective		t'	tʃ'	ts'	tʃ'		k'			
	Continuant	fortis			ʃ	s	ʃ		x	(x ^w)	(h)	(h ^w)
		lenis			l	z	ʒ		ɣ	(ɣ ^w)		
Sonorant	Nasal	plain	m	n								
		glottalized	(m')	(n')								
	Glide	plain						j		(w)		
		glottalized						(j')		(w')		

Vowels

	Front		Back	
	oral	nasal	oral	nasal
High	i ~ ɪ	ĩ		
Mid	e	ẽ	o	õ
Low			ɑ	ã

Grammar

Typology

Navajo is difficult to classify in terms of broad morphological typology: it relies heavily on affixes—mainly prefixes—like agglutinative languages,^[49] but these affixes are joined in unpredictable, overlapping ways that make them difficult to segment, a trait of fusional languages.^[50] In general, Navajo verbs contain more morphemes than

do nouns (on average, 11 for verbs compared to 4–5 for nouns), but noun morphology is less transparent.^[51] Navajo is sometimes classified as a fusional language^{[50][52]} and sometimes as agglutinative or even polysynthetic.^{[20][53]}

In terms of basic word order, Navajo has been classified as a subject–object–verb language.^{[54][55]} However, some speakers order the subject and object based on "noun ranking". In this system, nouns are ranked in three categories—humans, animals, and inanimate objects—and within these categories, nouns are ranked by strength, size, and intelligence. Whichever of the subject and object has a higher rank comes first. As a result, the agent of an action may be syntactically ambiguous.^[56] Other linguists such as Eloise Jelinek consider Navajo to be a discourse configurational language, in which word order is not fixed by syntactic rules, but determined by pragmatic factors in the communicative context.^[57]

Verbs

In Navajo, verbs are the main elements of their sentences, imparting a large amount of information. The verb is based on a stem, which is made of a root to identify the action and the semblance of a suffix to convey mode and aspect; however, this suffix is fused beyond separability.^[58] The stem is given somewhat more transparent prefixes to indicate, in this order, the following information: postpositional object, postposition, adverb-state, iterativity, number, direct object, deictic information, another adverb-state, mode and aspect, subject, classifier (see later on), mirativity and two-tier evidentiality. Some of these prefixes may be null; for example, there is only a plural marker (*da/daa*) and no readily identifiable marker for the other grammatical numbers.^[59]

Navajo does not distinguish strict tense *per se*; instead, an action's position in time is conveyed through mode, aspect, but also time adverbials or context. Each verb has an inherent aspect and can be conjugated in up to seven modes.^[60] These forms are as follows:

Modes:

- Imperfective – an incomplete action; can be used in past, present, or future time frames^[61]
- Perfective – a complete action; usually signifying the past tense but also applied to future states (e.g. "he will have gone")^[62]
- Usitative – a usual or typical action^[63]
- Iterative – a recurrent or repetitive action; often used interchangeably with the usitative^[63]
- Progressive – ongoing action; unlike the imperfective, the focus is more on the progression across space or time than incompleteness^[64]
- Future – a prospective action, analogous to the future tense^[64]
- Optative – a potential or desired action, similar to the subjunctive mood of Indo-European languages^[64]

Aspects:

- Momentaneous – an action that takes place at a specific point in time^[60]
- Continuative – an action that covers an indefinite timeframe, without a specific beginning, goal, or even temporal direction^[60]
- Durative – similar to the continuative, but not covering locomotion verbs^[60]
- Conclusive – similar to the durative, but emphasizing the completed nature of the action when in the perfective mode^[65]
- Repetitive – an action that is repeated in some way, dependent on the sub-aspect and sub-sub-aspect type used^[66]
- Semelfactive – an action that is distinguished from a connected group or series of actions^[67]
- Distributive – an action that occurs among a group of targets or locations^[68]
- Diversative – an action that occurs "here and there", among an unspecified group of targets or locations^[68]
- Reversative – an action involving change in physical or metaphorical direction^[69]
- Conative – an action the subject attempts to perform^[70]

- Transitional – an action involving transition from one status or form to another^[70]
- Cursive – an action of moving in a straight line in space or time^[70]

For any verb, the usitative and repetitive modes share the same stem, as do the progressive and future modes; these modes are distinguished with prefixes. However, pairs of modes other than these may also share the same stem,^[71] as illustrated in the following example, where the verb "to play" is conjugated into each of the five mode paradigms:

- Imperfective: *-né* – is playing, was playing, will be playing
- Perfective: *-ne'* – played, had played, will have played
- Progressive/future: *-neet'* – is playing along / will play, will be playing
- Usitative/repetitive: *-neeh* – usually plays, frequently plays, repeatedly plays
- Optative: *-ne'* – would play, may play

The basic set of subject prefixes for the imperfective mode, as well as the actual conjugation of the verb into these person and number categories, are as follows.^[72]

	Singular	Dual/plural
1.	<i>sh-</i>	<i>iid-</i>
2.	<i>ni-</i>	<i>oh-</i>
3.	–	
4.	<i>ji-</i>	

	Singular	Dual/plural
1.	<i>naashné</i> – I am playing	<i>neii'né</i> – We are playing
2.	<i>naniné</i> – You (s.) are playing	<i>naohné</i> – You (pl.) are playing
3.	<i>naané</i> – He/she/it is playing, they are playing	
4.	<i>najiné</i> – He/she/it/one is playing, they/people are playing	

The remaining piece of these conjugated verbs—the prefix *na*—is called an "outer" or "disjunct" prefix. It is the marker of the Continuative aspect (to play about).^[73]

Navajo distinguishes between the first, second, third, and fourth persons in the singular, dual, and plural numbers.^[74] The fourth person is similar to the third person, but is generally used for indefinite, theoretical actors rather than defined ones.^[75] Despite the potential for extreme verb complexity, only the mode/aspect, subject, classifier, and stem are absolutely necessary.^[59] Furthermore, Navajo negates clauses by surrounding the verb with the circumclitic *doo= ... =da* (e.g. *mósi doo nitsaa da* 'the cat is not big'). *Dooda*, as a single word, corresponds to English *no*.^[76]

Classificatory verbs are a set of verbal roots distinguishing eleven shapes and three classes of motion for each shape.^{[77][78]} The motion classes are:

- handle: movement of an object by continuing physical contact throughout the movement (take, bring, carry, lower, attach,...)
- propel: movement of an object by propulsion (throw, toss, drop,...)
- free flight: movement of a subject of its own without causative agent (fly, fall,...)

The shapes are listed here with their standard names and their corresponding *handle* root.^[77]

- Solid Roundish Objects (-á):
- Slender Stiff Object (-tá): stick,
- Plural Objects 2 (-jaa')

apple, coin,...	pen,...	profusion of small objects like seeds,...
▪ Load, Pack, Burden (-yí): furniture, large body of water...	▪ Flat Flexible Object (-tsooz): sheet, paper,...	▪ Open Container (-ká): water in a bottle, seeds in a box, snow in a truck,...
▪ Non-Compact Matter (-jool): hay, wig,...	▪ Mushy Matter (-tléé '): butter, mud, frog,...	▪ Animate Object (-tí): person, doll,...
▪ Slender Flexible Object (-lá): rope, belt, but also dual objects like gloves,...	▪ Plural Objects 1 (-nil): severality of objects	

For example, Navajo has no single verb that corresponds to the English 'give'. To say 'give me some hay', the Navajo verb *níljool* (Non-Compact Matter) must be used, while for 'give me a cigarette' the verb *nítíih* (SSO) must be used. Navajo also contains a separate system of classifiers that generally marks for voice. There are four classifiers: Ø-, *l*-, *d*-, and *l*-, placed between the personal prefixes and the verbal stem. The *l*- classifier indicates causation (transitivity increase), e.g. *yibéézh* (*yi*-Ø-*béézh*) 'it's boiling' vs. *yílbéézh* (*yi*-*l*-*béézh*) 'he's boiling it'. The *d*- and *l*- classifiers indicate passive voice (transitivity reduction), e.g. *yizéés* (*yi*-Ø-*zéés*) 'he's singeing it' vs. *yidéés* (*yi*-*d*-*zéés*) 'it's being singed'. The *d*- classifier is used to detransitivize verbs with Ø-, while *l*- is used for verbs with *l*-.^[79]

Nouns

Nouns are not required to form a complete Navajo sentence. Besides the extensive information that can be communicated with a verb, Navajo speakers may alternate between the third and fourth person to distinguish between two already specified actors, similarly to how speakers of languages with grammatical gender may repeatedly use pronouns.^[80]

Most nouns are not inflected for number,^[76] and plurality is usually encoded directly in the verb through the use of various prefixes or aspects, though this is by no means mandatory. In the following example, the verb on the right is used with the plural prefix *da*- and switches to the distributive aspect.

Kin
kin
house
áshlééh.
á-ø-sh-tlééh
make-3.OBJ-1.SUBJ-make.MOM.IMPF
'I build a house.'

Kin
kin
house
ádaashle '.
á-da-ø-sh-te '
make-PL-3.OBJ-1.SUBJ-make.DIST.IMPF
'I build houses.'

Some verbal roots encode number in their lexical definition (see classificatory verbs above). When available, the use of the correct verbal root is mandatory:

Béégashii
cow
sití.
3.SUBJ-lie(1).PERF
'The (one) cow lies.'

Béégashii
cow
shitéézh.
3.SUBJ-lie(2).PERF
'The (two) cows lie.'

Béégashii
cow
shijéé '.
3.SUBJ-lie(3+).PERF
'The (three or more) cows lie.'

Bilasáana
bilasáana
apple
ni 'aah.
shaa
sh-aa
1-to

Bilasáana
bilasáana
apple
niníít.
shaa
sh-aa
1-to

ø-ni- ' aah
 3.OBJ-2.SUBJ-give(SRO).MOM.PERF
 'You give me an apple.'

ø-ni-níít
 3.OBJ-2.SUBJ-give(PIO1).MOM.PERF
 'You give me apples.'

Number marking on nouns occurs only for terms of kinship and age-sex groupings. Other prefixes that can be added to nouns include possessive markers (e.g. *chidí* 'car' - *shichidí* 'my car') and a few adjectival enclitics. Generally, an upper limit for prefixes on a noun is about four or five.^[81]

Nouns are also not marked for case, this traditionally being covered by word order.^[82]

At 'ééd
 girl
yiyiilts á.
 3.OBJ-3.SUBJ-saw
 'The girl saw the boy.'

ashkii
 boy

Ashkii
 boy
yiyiilts á.
 3.OBJ-3.SUBJ-saw
 'The boy saw the girl.'

at 'ééd
 girl

Other parts of speech

Other parts of speech in Navajo are also relatively immutable, and tend to be short. These parts of speech include question particles, demonstrative adjectives, relative pronouns, interjections, conjunctions,^[83] and adverbs (both unique ones and those based on verbs).^[84] The Navajo numeral system is decimal, and some example numbers follow.^[85]

1 – <i>t 'áálá 'í</i>	6 – <i>hastáá</i>	11 – <i>la 'ts 'áadah</i>	16 – <i>hastá 'áadah</i>
2 – <i>naaki</i>	7 – <i>tsosts 'id</i>	12 – <i>naakits 'áadah</i>	17 – <i>tsosts 'idtsáadah</i>
3 – <i>táá '</i>	8 – <i>tseebíí</i>	13 – <i>táá 'ts 'áadah</i>	20 – <i>naadiin</i>
4 – <i>díí '</i>	9 – <i>náhást 'éí</i>	14 – <i>díí 'ts 'áadah</i>	300 – <i>táadi neeznádiin</i>
5 – <i>ashdla '</i>	10 – <i>neeznáá</i>	15 – <i>ashdla 'áadah</i>	4,567 – <i>díídi mííl dóó</i>
			<i>ba 'aan ashdladi</i>
			<i>neeznádiin dóó ba 'aan</i>
			<i>hastádiin dóó ba 'aan</i>
			<i>tsosts 'id</i>

Navajo does not contain a single part of speech analogous to adjectives; rather, some verbs describe static qualitative attributes (e.g. *nitsaa* 'he/she/it is large'), and demonstrative adjectives (e.g. *díí* 'this/these') are their own part of speech. However, these verbs, known as "neuter verbs", are distinguished by only having the imperfective mode, as they describe continuous states of being.^[86]

Vocabulary

The vast majority of Navajo vocabulary is of Athabaskan origin.^[87] However, the vocabulary size is still fairly small; one estimate counted 6,245 noun bases and 9,000 verb bases, with most of these nouns being derived from verbs.^[81] Prior to the European colonization of the Americas, Navajo did not borrow much from other languages, including from other Athabaskan and even Apachean languages. The Athabaskan family is fairly diverse in both phonology and morphology due to its languages' prolonged relative isolation.^[87] Even the Pueblo peoples, with whom the Navajo interacted with for centuries and borrowed cultural customs, have lent few words to the Navajo language. After Spain and Mexico took over Navajo lands, the language did not incorporate many Spanish words, either.^[88]

This resistance to word absorption extended to English, at least until the mid-twentieth century. Around this point, the Navajo language began importing some, though still not many, English words, mainly by young schoolchildren exposed to English.^[25]

Navajo has expanded its vocabulary to include Western technological and cultural terms through calques and Navajo descriptive terms. For example, the phrase for English *tank* is *chidí naa'na 'í bee 'eldq̣htsoh bikáá' dah naaznilígíí* 'vehicle that crawls around, by means of which big explosions are made, and that one sits on at an elevation'. This language purism also extends to proper nouns, such as the names of U.S. states (e.g. *Hoozdo* 'Arizona' and *Yootó* 'New Mexico'; see also *hahoodzo* 'state') and languages (*naakaii* 'Spanish').

Only one Navajo word has been fully absorbed into the English language: *hogan* (from Navajo *hooghan*) – a term referring to the traditional houses.^[89] Others with limited English recognition include *chindi* (an evil spirit of the deceased),^[90] and *Kayenta* (a place name, from *tée'ndééh* 'game pit where wild animals fall into deep water').^[91] The taxonomic genus name *Uta* may be of Navajo origin.^[92] It has been speculated that English-speaking settlers were reluctant to take on more Navajo loanwords compared to many other Native American languages, including the Hopi language, because the Navajo were among the most violent resisters to colonialism.^[93]

Orthography

Early attempts at a Navajo orthography were made in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One such attempt was based on the Latin alphabet, particularly the English variety, with some additional letters and diacritics. Anthropologists were frustrated by Navajo's having several sounds that are not found in English and lack of other sounds that are.^[94] Finally, the current Navajo orthography was developed between 1935 and 1940^[21] by Young and Morgan.

Navajo Orthography															
'	a	á	ạ	ạ́	aa	áá	ạạ	ạ́ạ́	b	ch	ch'	d	dl	dz	e
ʔ	ɑ	á	ã	ǎ	a:	á:	ã:	ǎ:	p	tʃ ^h	tʃ'	t	t ^l	ts	e
é	ɛ̣	ẹ́	ee	éé	ɛ̣ɛ̣	éẹ́	g	gh	h	hw	i	í	j	ị́	ii
é	ẽ	ẹ̃	e:	é:	ẽ:	ẹ̃:	k	ɣ	h/x	x ^w	ɪ	í	ĩ	ị̃	ɪ:
íí	j̣j̣	ị́ị́	j	k	k'	kw	l	ɬ	m	n	o	ó	ɔ̣	ọ́	oo
í:	ĩ:	ị̃:	tʃ	k ^h /kx	k'	k ^{h w} /kx ^w	l	ɬ	m	n	o	ó	õ	ọ̃	o:
óó	ɔ̣ɔ̣	ọ́ọ́	s	sh	t	t'	tɬ	tɬ'	ts	ts'	w	x	y	z	zh
ó:	õ:	ọ̃:	s	ʃ	t ^h /tx	t'	tɬ ^h	tɬ'	ts ^h	ts'	w/ ɣ ^w	h/x	j̣/j̣	z	ʒ

An apostrophe (') is used to mark ejective consonants (e.g. *ch'*, *tl'*)^[95] as well as mid-word or final glottal stops. However, initial glottal stops are usually not marked.^[45] The voiceless glottal fricative (/h/) is normally written as *h*, but appears as *x* after the consonants *s*, *z*, and digraphs ending in *h* to avoid phonological ambiguity.^{[95][96]} The voiced velar fricative is written as *y* before *i* and *e* (where it is palatalized /j̣/), as *w* before *o* (where it is labialized /ɣ^w/), and as *gh* before *a*.^[97]

Navajo represents nasalized vowels with an ogonek (̣), sometimes described as a reverse cedilla; and represents the voiceless alveolar lateral fricative (/ɬ/) with a barred *L* (capital *Ł*, lowercase *ł*).^[98] The ogonek is placed centrally under a vowel, but it was imported from Polish and Lithuanian, which do not use it under certain vowels such as *o* or any vowels with accent marks. For example, in proper Navajo writing, the ogonek below lowercase *a* is written centered below the letter, whereas fonts for *a* with ogonek intended for Polish and Lithuanian such as those

used in common Web browsers render the ogonek connected to the bottom right of the letter. As of 2017, no Unicode font has been developed to properly accommodate Navajo typography. Google is working to correct this oversight with Noto fonts.

The first Navajo-capable typewriter was developed in preparation for a Navajo newspaper and dictionary created in the 1940s. The advent of early computers in the 1960s necessitated special fonts to input Navajo text, and the first Navajo font was created in the 1970s.^[98] Navajo virtual keyboards were made available for iOS devices in November 2012 and Android devices in August 2013.^[99]

Sample text

This is the first paragraph of a Navajo short story.^[100]

Navajo original: *Ashiiké t'óó diigis léi' tólikaní ła' ádiilníł dóó nihaa nahidoonih níigo yee hodeez' ǵ jini. Áko t'áá at'qq ch'il na'atl'o'ii k'iidiilá dóó hááhgóóshíí yinaalnishgo t'áá álah ch'il na'atl'o'ii néineest' ǵ jini. Áádóó tólikaní áyiilaago t'áá bíhígíí t'áá at'qq t'ízikágí yii' haidééłbjiid jini. "Háadida díí tólikaní yígíí doo ła' aha'diizil da," níigo aha'deet' ǵ jini'. Áádóó baa nahidoonih biniiyé kintahgóó dah yidiłjii jini' ...*

English translation: Some crazy boys decided to make some wine to sell, so they each planted grapevines and, working hard on them, they raised them to maturity. Then, having made wine, they each filled a goatskin with it. They agreed that at no time would they give each other a drink of it, and they then set out for town lugging the goatskins on their backs ...

See also

- Indigenous languages of the Americas
- Southern Athabaskan languages
- Navajo code talkers

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External links

- [Wiktionary:Appendix:Navajo alphabet](#)
- [Hózhó Náhasdłǫ́ ' - Language of the Holy People](#) (Navajo web site with flash and audio, helps with learning Navajo) (<http://www.gomyson.com/>), [gomyson.com](http://www.gomyson.com)
- [Navajo Swadesh vocabulary list of basic words](#) (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Swadesh_lists_for_Den%C3%A9-Yeniseian_languages) (from Wiktionary's [Swadesh-list appendix](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Swadesh_lists) (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Swadesh_lists))
- [Contrasts between Navajo consonants](#) (<http://hctv.humnet.ucla.edu/departments/linguistics/VowelsandConsonants/course/chapter11/navajo/navajo.html>) (sound files from [Peter Ladefoged](#)). [humnet.ucla.edu](http://hctv.humnet.ucla.edu)
- [Navajo Language & Bilingual Links](#) (<http://www.sanjuan.k12.ut.us/linknavj.html>) (from San Juan school district). [sanjuan.k12.ut.us](http://www.sanjuan.k12.ut.us)
- [Navajo Language Academy](#) (<http://www.navajolanguageacademy.org>), [navajolanguageacademy.org](http://www.navajolanguageacademy.org)
- [Tuning in to Navajo: The Role of Radio in Native Language Maintenance](#) (http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/TIL_17.html), jan.ucc.nau.edu
- [An Initial Exploration of the Navajo Nation's Language and Culture Initiative](#) (http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/TIL_20.html), jan.ucc.nau.edu
- [Bá' ólta' í Adoodleelgi Bína' niltingo Bił Haz' á](#) (Center for Diné Teacher Education) (<http://www.dinecollege.edu/academics/teacher.php>) (in Navajo), [dinecollege.edu](http://www.dinecollege.edu)
- [Languagegeek Unicode fonts and Navajo keyboard layouts](#) (http://www.languagegeek.com/dene/dine/dine_bizaad.html), [languagegeek.com](http://www.languagegeek.com)
- [Navajo fonts](#) (https://web.archive.org/web/20060520051410/http://www.dinecollege.edu/opr/VERDN_.TTF), [dinecollege.edu](http://www.dinecollege.edu)
- [The Navajo Language](#) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20050321120631/http://library.thinkquest.org/J002073F/thinkquest/Language.htm>), library.thinkquest.org
- [Reflections on Navajo Poetry](#) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20080709030512/http://www.ou.edu/worldlit/onlinemagazine/2007September/webster.htm>), [ou.edu](http://www.ou.edu)
- [How to count in Navajo](#) (<http://www.languagesandnumbers.com/how-to-count-in-navajo/en/nav/>), [languagesandnumbers.com](http://www.languagesandnumbers.com)
- [Digital Public Library of America. Navajo-language items](#) (http://dp.la/search?language%5B%5D=Navajo&page_size=100&utf8=✓), various dates.
- [iPad keyboard app](#) (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/navajo-keyboard/id577841547?mt=8>)
- [Android keyboard app](#) (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.neosoft.navajo&hl=en>)
- [Android dictionary app](#) (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.navajoapp.speak&hl=en>)
- [Duolingo Navajo course](#) (<https://www.duolingo.com/course/nv/en/Learn-Navajo-Online>), released in 2018^[4]

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- [Navajo reflections of a general theory of lexical argument structure](#) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20120312065350/http://www.museunacional.ufrj.br/linguistica/congresso/1/txnavar.pdf>) (Ken Hale & Paul Platero), [museunacional.ufrj.br](http://www.museunacional.ufrj.br)
- [Remarks on the syntax of the Navajo verb part I: Preliminary observations on the structure of the verb](#) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20150823194811/http://www.museunacional.ufrj.br/linguistica/congresso/1/txnavtsl.pdf>) (Ken Hale), [museunacional.ufrj.br](http://www.museunacional.ufrj.br)
- [The Navajo Prolongative and Lexical Structure](#) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20120703222655/http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~carlota/papers/Nphon.pdf>) (Carlota Smith), [cc.utexas.edu](http://uts.cc.utexas.edu)
- [A Computational Analysis of Navajo Verb Stems](#) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110928005548/http://linguistics.byu.edu/faculty/eddingtond/navajo.pdf>) (David Eddington & Jordan Lachler), linguistics.byu.edu
- [Grammaticization of Tense in Navajo: The Evolution of *nt'ée*](#) (https://web.archive.org/web/20121212023309/http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/research/Chee%20et%20al_vol15.pdf) (Chee, Ashworth, Buescher & Kubacki), [linguistics.ucsb.edu](http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu)

- A methodology for the investigation of speaker's knowledge of structure in Athabaskan (<https://wayback.archive-it.org/all/20090306041231/https://urresearch.rochester.edu/retrieve/6548/BLS+McD&Suss.pdf>) (Joyce McDonough & Rachel Sussman), urresearch.rochester.edu
 - How to use Young and Morgan's *The Navajo Language* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20120307084257/http://www.bcs.rochester.edu/cls/f2000n2/mcdonough.pdf>) (Joyce McDonough), [bcs.rochester.edu](http://www.bcs.rochester.edu)
 - Time in Navajo: Direct and Indirect Interpretation (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160304054057/http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~carlota/papers/Time%20in%20Navajo.pdf>) (Carlota S. Smith, Ellavina T. Perkins, Theodore B. Fernald), cc.utexas.edu
 - OLAC Resources in and about the Navajo language (<http://www.language-archives.org/language/nav>)
1. "On Indigenous Peoples' Day, Duolingo is releasing two courses on endangered languages" (<https://www.post-gazette.com/business/tech-news/2018/10/08/duolingo-indigenous-peoples-day-2018-hawaiian-navajo-endangered-languages-pittsburgh/stories/201810080002>). *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190209123819/https://www.post-gazette.com/business/tech-news/2018/10/08/duolingo-indigenous-peoples-day-2018-hawaiian-navajo-endangered-languages-pittsburgh/stories/201810080002>) from the original on 2019-02-09. Retrieved 2019-02-06.

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This page was last edited on 19 June 2020, at 05:10 (UTC).

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